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Notes on the current situation in East Timor

In 1974 the Diocese of Dili recorded the population of East Timor as:

Roman Catholic	220.314
Protestant	2.550
Confucian	5.660
Moslem	133
Animist	460.112
Total	688.771

October 1978, the Assistant of Defence and Security of the Regional Territory of East Timor, recorded the population as:

Roman Catholic	255.417
Protestant	4.354
Confucian	-
Moslem	661
Animist	68.839
Total	329.271

The report asks: where are the other 359.500?

According to the Assitant of Defence of Security of the Regional Territory of East Timor, on December 6, 1978 the total population of <u>displaced persons</u> in ET was 318.921, spread over urban rural areas as follows:

Dili	17.861
Liquica	17.033
Ermera	15.548
Maliana	37.449
Suai	21.230
Same	14.357
Alas	2.649
Laclubta	6.001
Viqueque	69.799
Mana tuto	10.388
Baucau	10.434
Quelicai	12.263
Lage	10.082
Baguia	4.596
Lospalos	18.474

The report speaks of a journey to Maubisse in early March

1979 with a military convoy. A local source in Maubisse has recorded the death toll there as follows:

January 1979 - 74 died
February " - 101 died
early March " - 26 died.

In 1976, Maubisse's population was 9.607
In March 1979, Maubisse's population was 4.586.

The report concludes that over 5000 are dead or have moved.

Burials in Maubisse consist of the corpse being covered with bamboo as the people are too poor to make a wooden coffin.

The journey continued to Turiscai. The report mentions that this is the scene of Xavier do Amaral's birth and early childhood, and that Nicolau Lobato was 'shot to death' in a nearby valley.

The Head of the Subdistrict of Turiscai supplied these statistics:

164 died during 1978
120 have died Jan-March 13, 1979.

The report then makes this comment:

"An increasing death toll seems to be a general phenomenon over all the villages in East Timor".

The report says of Ermera:

"In Ermera, the densely populated capital town of a coffee producing district where the 'refugees' coming back from the mountains were held, the death toll was so high that people started to use the expression: 'the more refugees, the more corpses'. Up till Easter 1979, the Ermera district was not yet quiet and safe".

It adds that the talk is that 300 die/month at the Ermera refugee camp.

In acomment on the numbers of displaced persons mentioned in the figures (page 1), the report says:

"The numbers are still increasing since each day there are new arrivals coming down from the mountains. They come back in extremely dire conditions, practically naked and starving to death. They lost already

many friends and relatives. They hope to find something to eat, but when the food does not materialise they become very disappointed. If there is any food at all, it uses to be very little and coming very late. Which makes the whole aid programme actually meaningless."

The report gives the following instances:

- in Feb 1979 the Government Health in Maubisse, e.g. had a supply of 300 pills of cloroquins (sic) and 5 meter band aid (sic). But according to health officers every day 150 patients come for nursing/treatment. "At the same time there were medicines for sale in the Chinese shop. However, people could not afford to pay for them".

- In the middle of March, 1979, 5 tons of corn arrived in Maubisse. More than 6000 people had been waiting for the corn for 5 weeks. "Providing aid in small quantities and with long delays impresses as an irony. No wonder that people start complaining that the Indonesian authorities want them to die off by hunger and disease".

The report ~~then~~ gives this general comment:

Despite Government subsidy of $US 5.000.000 and the availability of supplies in Dili, the "Indonesian Red Cross is unable to carry out an efficient programme. Lack of transportation is the big bottleneck. Unfortunately supplied stored in the godown of Dili promote manipulation, black market and the like. Medicines are sold in the shops for prices only very few can afford to pay."

The report speaks of an informal conversation with the Vice Governor of East Timor who stated that the Central Government had allocated three (3) billion Rp. to the Indonesian Red Cross for its aid programme.

Then the report comments:

"All over the area one hears rumours about aid manipulations by the regional government. Many kinds of clothes and medicines are for sale in the shops in Dili. What happens to the food supplies?

(Ed. note: this section contains nothing not already stated in the section immediately above. However I have included it simply because it was in the report).

The story is told of a journey with a friend from Fatumaca to Laga, by truck. "In Laga we bought rice for Rp. 25.000 /bag. At the same time in Dili the price was Rp. 17.000/bag. As

we drove back to Fatumaca with 50 bags we discussed our position. We were participating in the black market - were we thieves or were we saviours?"

The report then comments:

"Sometimes I have pity with the Central Government which wants to help its people, but is unable to control the regional and local officials. The Government should not only check with its representatives in the regions, but should also go directly to the people to see whether the officials are really doing what they report. In that case the complaint would not be heard that 'ET is a project of a certain group of people in an outlying area'."

Some suggestions:

1. March 26, 1979, the Military Command of East Timor was officially ended by the Minister of Defence and Security. "However this does not mean that the situation is normal now. At the beginning of April some warships left Dili with a few battalions which had completed their duties in ET. But immediately after their departure some new battalions arrived to take their place. According to rumours during the last night before the military command was dissolved the remaining Fretilin were arrested. Nobody knows where they are now. Even after Easter some military were killed in a fight with the Fretilin. However, there were no burial ceremones conducted. Hence, it is still too early to speak of a normal situation".

2. "Outside aid in considerable quantities for food and shelter is still badly needed".

3. The Indonesian Bishops Conference should ask the Indonesian Government to Channel aid via the Church not the Regional Government.
"As a matter of fact, the Government's aid is not lacking in quantity, but in the management of its distribution".

4. Religious Orders need to be brought in on special education efforts.

Ed. note: what follows is an assortment of interesting bits and pieces taken at random from the reports

- Six priests spent a couple of years with Fretilin in in the mountains.

- the Apostolic Pronuncio (Vatican Ambassador), Archbishop Farano visited East Timor on April 22, 1979.

- the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dili is Monsignor Martinho da ~~Const~~ Costa Lopes.

- there are 29 priests, 25 sisters and 5 brothers in ET.

- most of the 51 schools run by the Church need repairing.

- at the beginning of the war, in 1975, 70% of the minor seminary of Dare was 'destroyed by navy missiles'. It is situated on a hillside in a parallel line with Dili.

- in Feb. 1979, the Military Commander of Central Java organised the assignment and transportation to Dili of 182 teachers from Semarang, Magelang, Yogyakarta, and Solo.

- in June 1979, it is expected that a Government Teachers College will open in Dili. It is also expected that 40 students will receive scholarships to attend this college.

- the Government budget for 78/79 will allocate 18.000.000 Rp (US$27.500) for rehabilitation of Catholic worship houses (sic) in ET.

- the number of civil servants in ETalready amounts to 3541 "out of proportion to the population of ET".

- Yayasan Santo Paulus was established in Dili, Feb 18, 1979 to promote and coordinate educational work of the Church. Before the war the Diocese ran 51 schools, - 45 primary and 6 secondary.

  Fatumaca area remained free of war operations.

- In Sept 1977, the Social Delegate of Dili, with the assistance of LPPS and CRS Indonesia, prepared an East Timor Emergency and Rehabilitation Programme: this was presented for funding to ~~Caritas~~ Caritas organisations in Europe and Australia, Lenten actions and private funds.

A special account has been opened at the finance department of the Indonesian Bishops Office in Jakarta. In the last 18 months approximately 100.000.000 Rp have been channelled to the programme in Dili, to be spent on such as the following:

food, clothing, medicine
orphans and widows
shelter and housing
agricultural efforts, animal husbandry
schools, especially the tech. at Fatumaca.

- ACR, CRS, and the Maryknoll Fathers have promised more. Misereor has promised a substantial subsidy for the tech. in Fatumaca.

  The Indon. Lenten fund and Indonesian dioceses are providing about 20.000.000 Rp. of assistance.

- "Once in a while the legality of the Church programme is questioned by the authorities, because for security reasons the Indonesian Government assigned the (army controlled) IRC as the sole implementer of the aid activities in East Timor".

  E.g. the regional commander of Dili told the Parish priest of Baucau to stop buying rice because food distribution is a monopoly of the Government.

The report carries the date of 25 April, 1979.